

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

July 16-July 31, 2010

HEALTH

Community Outreach Promotes Healthy

Behaviors: USAID is working with local non-government organizations to implement *Jalasa Sehi Jamea* (JSJ), or community health meetings, as an effective way to spread key health messages and promote positive behavior change within villages and communities. The JSJ program is a series of structured, segregated meetings of men and women who live in the same community carried out over a six-month period of time.

Using local language audiocassettes, these two-hour interactive sessions bring information and answers to the health discussions in a confidential and supportive environment. During the sessions, the men and women are able to learn about birth spacing methods, safe water systems, and diarrhea prevention products as well as express their needs and misconceptions related to these public health products.



A facilitator leads a community-based JSJ women's health meeting.

PHOTO: USAID/COMPRI-A



Men discuss birth spacing products and other health products at a JSJ men's meeting in Daman District, Kandahar.

PHOTO: USAID/COMPRI-A

Participants' direct participation is encouraged and accurate information on the health topics and USAID's socially marketed condoms, oral and injectable contraceptives, safe water solution, and oral rehydration salts is presented. The participation of husbands within the separate male sessions underscores the role they play in providing basic family planning and maternal and child healthcare for their families. The JSJ sessions are complemented by radio and TV spots, religious leader training, and in more remote areas, mobile cinemas.

The program was first introduced in four districts of Hirat, Nangarhar, Takhar and Bamyan provinces and was later expanded to 24 districts in Hilmand, Uruzgan, Kandahar, Farah, Nimroz, and Ghazni

provinces. Recently, the program further expanded to an additional 88 districts in 18 provinces, with a particular emphasis on key terrain districts and provinces in the south and east with the goal of reaching all 34 provinces in the country. So far, the program has conducted over 5,250 meeting sessions and reached approximately 70,500 men and women with life-saving health information.

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EDUCATION

USAID Returnees Bring Research Methods to Their Universities: Master's graduates from the University of Massachusetts (UMass), Amherst Center for International Education are giving back to their faculties of education by passing on training and research as part of USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP) returnees program

Between July 3-15, a workshop brought together returnees from five universities to share their experiences of coming home and to design and develop a "Basics of Academic Research Course" for their colleagues.



USAID's Higher Education Project (HEP) returnees program members.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

The six USAID/HEP returnees not only brought the knowledge and experience they acquired at UMass, but also a practical perspective on the Afghan higher education context to the course design process. Their background gave them a unique insight into carrying out research in Afghanistan and also key knowledge about the needs and capabilities of their Faculty of Education colleagues. In addition, they were knowledgeable about the procedures of the Ministry of Higher Education, which outlined in its National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2010-2014 its commitment to improving academic research in their institutions.

Improving Reading in Community Based Schools: The USAID Partnership for Advancing Community-based Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) project organized training for 17 emergency community-based education (ECBE) trainers from Hilmand, Kandahar, and Urzgan provinces. The training mainly focused on improving participants' knowledge in supporting the ECBEs. The participants gained new methods on how to improve students' reading skills. In addition, the trainers also obtained new knowledge on community mobilization such as how to convince people to establish school management committees to support education and sustain school operations.

Due to insurgent activity in the abovementioned provinces, the Ministry of Education-run schools have been closed, and there was no opportunity for students to continue their education. USAID installed the ECBE in areas where the populations have been displaced or threatened by displacement. In addition to the training, the teachers receive new skills and teaching methodology like how to attract students to actively participate in the learning process. Communities and parents were not seriously involved in school activities in the past.



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STABILIZATION

Cricket Training in Jalalabad Brings Young Cricketers from the Eastern Region Together:

Sports can be an effective medium to engage at-risk youth in a healthy and productive activity that transcends tribal and ethnic lines – a rare symbol of national unity. With Afghanistan's recent cricket success on the world stage, qualifying for its first major national team tournament (2010 ICC WorldTwenty20), cricket is becoming a very popular sport.

A recent USAID/Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project provided 22 young cricketers playing for their provincial teams from Laghman, Kunar, and Nangarhar with the opportunity to train for two weeks at the Nangarhar Cricket Academy in Jalalabad - with new uniforms and cricket equipment they could keep. The training allowed the boys to build friendships, learn better sportsmanship, and improve their athletic skills with professional mentors. The final cricket match and closing ceremony event was covered by various local media outlets. USAID's Deputy Field Program Officer for Nangarhar, the Head of Youth Affairs in Laghman Province, and Nangarhar's Head of Sports and Olympics were joined in the audience by two Afghan national cricket players and their Deputy Coach, who announced that he may select one of the trainees from Kunar Province to play on the National under-19 Cricket Team and thanked USAID/LGCD for providing him with the opportunity to discover unknown talent in the country. The Local Governance and Community Development program is a USAID stabilization program working to strengthen the connections between communities and their local governments at the district and provincial level throughout Afghanistan.



Aftab Alam, national cricket team member, awards medals to young cricketers.

PHOTO: USAID/LGCD

Kandahar City Youth Engaged in Vocational Training: In Kandahar City, USAID's LGCD program is funding a six-month vocational training program in masonry and carpentry for 40 working-age men. At the opening ceremony on August 2, 2010, the Manager of Vocational Training Programs at the Department of Labor and Social Affairs (DoLSA) spoke about the importance of the opportunity this training represented for the individual trainees as they face high rates of unemployment. Both the office of the Governor and DoLSA were closely involved in planning the project, a process LGCD pursues in-line with its aim to build communities' confidence in the government's capacity to provide these services. As these trainees enter the workforce, the project also represents an effort to ensure that funds being spent on construction projects in Kandahar profit local laborers.

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ECONOMIC GROWTH

Assistance to 14 Budgetary Units in Preparing Budget Circular 1 for (Afghan Year)

1390: Budget Circular 1 is an essential document that requires a budgetary unit to specify its priorities for the next three years and indicate how these priorities will be achieved through new and ongoing development projects. At this stage, only indicative cost figures are required, but the priorities must be clear, precise, and well-defined to reflect the budgetary unit's policies and responsibilities and their relationship with Afghanistan National Development Strategy. This document is the first step that marks the beginning of the New Budget Preparation cycle for 1390. All 14 budgetary units assisted by Economic Growth and Governance Initiative (EGGI) advisors submitted their Budget Circular No. 1 to the Ministry of Finance.

Training of Introduction to the Economy of Afghanistan: On June 7, 2010, Private Sector Development Directorate (PSDD) staff received training on "Introduction to Economy of Afghanistan." The training sought to increase the Directorate staff's awareness and understanding of core issues and the context of their work within the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MOCI).

Provincial Budget Execution Workshop at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled: On May 30, 2010, EGGI advisors, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, conducted a Provincial Budget Execution Workshop for 41 Provincial Directors and staff from the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. The workshop provided instruction on program budget reform and budget execution. The Budget Execution module broadly explained the coding system and filling processes for different budget execution forms.



EGGI principal advisors lecture during the Introduction to the Economy of Afghanistan training session.

PHOTO: USAID/EGGI

Training of Trainers Workshop for Program Budget Trainers: On June 9, 2010, the Ministry of Finance Budget Integration Reform Unit conducted a "Training of Trainers" workshop for eight EGGI program budget trainers to prepare them for upcoming Program Budget workshops. The training focused on revised training modules, forms and other important terminologies.